

1-2010

Adventist Engaged Encounter Rebirthed at Andrews

Keri Suarez
Andrews University

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Recommended Citation

Suarez, Keri, "Adventist Engaged Encounter Rebirthed at Andrews" (2010). *Lake Union Herald*. 379.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/379>

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Andrea Wincek and her fiancée, Phillip Byrd, were one of 11 couples who participated in the October 2009 Adventist Engaged Encounter at Andrews University.

Adventist Engaged Encounter rebirthed at Andrews

In the spring of 1978, with lots of motivation but only a few years of personal experience as family life educators, Don and Sue Murray, along with three Seminary students and their wives, launched an experiential relationship enrichment program for the engaged couples of Andrews University.

The couples had only six short weeks to prepare for their first program; but miraculously it came together. The first weekend-long program was in May 1978. Then the Murrays were asked to make a long-term commitment to offer the program for engaged couples two to three times per year. “We agreed, but how could we know that ‘long-term’ would mean 26 years, 80 weekends and more than 1,500 couples attending?” says Don.

“Engaged Encounter” seemed to be a perfect moniker for the program. “Adventist” was later added to the title, and thus the beginning of Ad-

ventist Engaged Encounter (AEE) at Andrews University.

The weekend is a guided relational and spiritual journey of couple enrichment and growth for engaged and recently married couples who desire a Christian marriage. It is not a lecture series, a sermon, a group sharing experience, a Bible study or a weekend vacation. Each couple is given private time for personal reflection and couple sharing. A wide variety of subjects are presented, giving each couple the freedom to explore each important area.

“We live in a culture that is often obsessed with finding a ‘soul mate’ to marry,” says Don. “Seeking to find someone we are totally compatible with has merit, but it is not a biblical picture of marriage. Commitment is more important than compatibility. Jesus loves us because He decided to, in spite of our incompatibility with Him. He loves us and gave His life for us because of that commitment. AEE builds on that important truth.”

Since March 1998, Union College in Lincoln, Neb., has conducted AEE weekends, following the model started

at Andrews in 1978. Walla Walla University and Southern Adventist University have also hosted AEE weekends led by the Andrews team.

In 2004, Don accepted a position out of state, and AEE was put on the shelf at Andrews. But the need and desire for AEE was still there. In August 2008, the Murrays were asked to mentor a new generation of AEE team leaders. After months of planning, the re-birth of AEE at Andrews occurred the weekend of Oct. 23–25, 2009, with 11 couples attending. One wife-to-be said, “We were impressed by all the special touches: the diversity of topics, the central focus of God’s role in our lives, the Love Feast, couple communion and our personal poster.”

AEE is Adventist in orientation, but open to any engaged couple who want to build a Christian marriage.

“Good marriages don’t just happen!” says Don. “They must be developed through a process. The AEE experience offers couples insights, tools and confidence to enrich their relationship and strengthen their love and commitment to one another.”

As with most things in life, a new generation is ready to take the lead. Don says, “It was always God’s AEE program. We will continue to support and be a resource to the current team, but our role will change to reflect the recognition that the time has come for a new generation of AEE leadership.”

The next AEE is scheduled for Mar. 26–28. Registration closes on Mar. 19. The cost for couples is \$35 if both are Andrews students, \$50 if one is an Andrews student and \$75 if neither is an Andrews student. Contact Andrews University’s Office of Campus Ministries for details about the program. Call 269-471-6241 or send e-mail to cm@andrews.edu.

Keri Suarez, media relations specialist,
Office of Integrated Marketing &
Communication